

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

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- The following questions are a compilation of suggestions taken from a training activity conducted in October, 2004 in Madison, Wisconsin on Adoptive Family Assessment. Suggested questions from the training curriculum have been added to the list of questions compiled by the group. This is not an exhaustive list, but will perhaps give assessors some additional tools to enhance interviews with prospective adoptive parents. Bear in mind that several of these questions can be used in assessing more than one element.

Motivation # 1

- -Why do you want to adopt? Why are you interested in adoption at this time?
- What is your “best case” outcome in your plan to foster/adopt? What is the “worst case scenario?”
- How do you imagine adoption changing you and your family?
- How do you envision adoption benefiting you personally? How will it benefit your family?

Child Desired/Preferred #2

- What type of needs do your children have? How do you meet these needs?
- What do children need?
- What can you give a child?
- How would a child feel coming into your home?
- How would you keep the child’s culture alive?
- What activities do you do as a family?
- How is it different to parent a birth child vs. an adoptive child?
- How will you prepare your birth children for this new family transition?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- What does your child do to frustrate you? How does this look (how do you deal with being frustrated?)?
- How do you spend quality time with your child?
- What are the signs of attachment? How will you know when your child is attached?
- How will you know if your child is having attachment difficulties? How will you deal with this?
- Have you had to deal with this in the past?
- What do you enjoy most about parenting? What do you dislike?
- How does parenting fit into your day-to-day life? Does it interfere with anything you would rather be doing?
- Tell me about your children. How are they alike? How are they different? Do you parent them differently? How? Why?
- Have you ever had fulltime responsibility for a child who had emotional or behavioral problems? Describe that experience to me. What did you like most about caring for the child? Least? What did you learn from this experience? What did you learn about yourself?
- Have you presented the idea of foster care or adoption to your children? What did you tell them? How did they respond?
- How do you currently handle sibling issues such as jealousy, fighting, and competition? How will your children handle additional siblings?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- Describe your parenting style. Why do you parent your children in that fashion?
- How much direction/supervision should parents offer children? At what point do you think it is too much?

Experience with Children # 3

- How did you learn about foster care or adoption? What did you do to learn more about the process and the expectations of the role?
- Tell me about your experiences with Pre-service training. What did you find most helpful? Least helpful?
- What questions did your Pre-service training raise for you? What assignments or areas raised during the training made you uncomfortable?
- What additional learning opportunities would you find helpful?
- How will you provide for the cultural needs of children placed in your home?
- How have you prepared your children for foster care or adoption?
- How have you prepared your extended family for foster care or adoption?
- What specific steps or resources are elements of your “Survival Plan” to assure your ability to take care of your own or your family’s needs following a placement?

Training and Skill Building Development # 4

- What resources have you identified in your community to support your decision to foster or adopt? How will you access those resources?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- What type of help from the placing agency do you imagine you will need most as you have your placement?
- Do you have expertise or experience in working with children who have special needs?
- What preparation activities or resources are available to prospective foster/adoptive parents in your area?

Discipline Techniques #5

- How does the way you were raised impact how you discipline?
- In your interactions with children, what behaviors frustrate you?
- Cite typical child's behaviors and ask how parent would manage? (Specific age groups)
- What resources or training have you utilized?
- Provide a child's success story and how you helped.
- What works with your child? What doesn't?
- If you hit a roadblock in parenting, what do you do?
- What are the most important rules in your house? How are these rules communicated and enforced?
- Describe how you normally discipline your own children. Why did you choose these particular strategies? How do you discipline other people's children? What discipline are you most comfortable with? Which do you avoid?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- How do you currently handle sibling issues such as jealousy, fighting, and competition? How will your children handle additional siblings?
- How did your parents discipline you when you misbehaved? How are your discipline techniques different from those used by your parents?

Child Care and Temporary Care # 6

- Do you have experience working with child care providers?

Future Plans for the Child # 7

- What is your hope with birth parents?
- What level of open adoption are you comfortable with?
- Experience with service providers-, which ones have you used?
- Do you support sibling contact? Do you feel it is important?
- What services have you sought out in the past (for yourself or your children)?
- How do you feel about the adoption process?
- Have you had experience in open adoption? If so what has it been?
- Have you participated on teams and committees? How have your experiences with teams been positive? How have they been frustrating for you?
- What experiences have you had in relating to persons with a culture or style different from your own? What did you learn as a result of that experience?
- What do you imagine would be the “best possible outcome” for an adopted child placed in your home?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- How do you view your role in communicating with the child's birth family?
- Describe your experiences in working with schools, physicians, therapists, or other professionals in the past.

Concurrent Planning # 8

- What is your understanding of abuse and neglect?
- Would you be open to contact with birth family? With whom?
- Describe your contact in the past or now with birth family?
- What has your experience been with birth families?
- Why do you think it might be important to the child to have birth family contact?
- How comfortable will you be talking with child about birth family? What will you do/say?
- Why do you think parents maltreat their children? How do you think they feel?
What do you think should happen to parents who neglect or abuse their children?
- What have been your experiences with people of other races or cultures? Have you ever been in a social situation when you have been the only one like yourself?
- How do you think children feel about their abusive parents?
- How would you explain the birth parent's behavior to the child?
- What is your definition of abuse/neglect?
- How do you imagine the child feels?
- How might the child's feelings about his birth family impact his behavior?
- Are you interested in transracial placement?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- Have you experienced loss (can you identify with the child)?
- Have you prepared a life book?
- Is it okay for child to miss/love birth family?

Applicant's Family and General Background #9

- What are your favorite memories/crises from childhood?
- Who was your primary caregiver?
- What did you do together as a family?
- Tell me about current relationships with parents, siblings, and other family?
- What activities did you enjoy and or participate in as an adolescent?
- What is your educational history?
- What is your employment history?
- Please explain your educational and career choices.
- Where did you grow up? Tell me about your parents, brothers, and sisters.
- Tell me about your marriage (or relationship with your significant other). Give me a history. How did you meet? How long have you been together? What drew you to each other? What has life together been like?
- Have you had previous marriages (serious relationships)? How did they end?
- How many children do you have? Do you have children you are not parenting?
- Tell about your work. How long have you been with your current employer?
- Have you ever been arrested? Was there a conviction? What was happening in your life at the time this arrest or conviction occurred? What was the outcome?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

Finances # 10

Health and Psychological #11

- How do you describe yourself? Your spouse?
- Tell me about your relationships – family and other.
- What causes you stress and how do you deal with it? Can people tell when you are stressed?
- Who do you go to for support and advice?
- Who could you call in a crisis at 3 a.m.?
- What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses as a parent? Your spouse?
- What would your kids say about you?
- What's your daily routine? How do you deal with distractions or interruptions?
- What do you and your spouse do in your free time and for fun?
- How do you deal with conflict?
- Have you used treatment or counseling for mental health or AODA? Did you find it helpful?
- Can you describe your own personal strengths? Tell me about the strengths of other family members. What are your weak or vulnerable spots? What pushes your buttons? In what ways could a child with emotional or behavioral problems push your buttons?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

- Have you really wanted something you couldn't have? What was it? How did you feel? How did you react?
- Have you ever had to work towards a goal for a long time? What was it? Did you ever give up? At what point, and why?
- What are the three hardest situations you've ever faced in your life? How did you overcome them? What would you do differently today?
- Did you ever feel unappreciated by your family or on the job? Under what circumstances? How did you handle it?
- Have you ever felt or been rejected by someone you loved, particularly your children? What was it like? Why did you think it happened? How did you handle it?
- -How is anger and frustration handled in this family? How does each family member express anger? How does the family as a whole handle and manage negative feelings?
- Please tell me about the worst thing you've ever had to deal with as an individual? As a couple? What was it? What was it like? What did you do? How did it affect you? Your family?
- Tell me about your hardest loss? Why was it so hard? What helped? How long did it take for you to recover? How did you know you were on the road to normalcy again?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

Marriage/Relationship of Applicants # 12

- Who does what? Adults and kids.
- How are decisions made? Example; who is part of the family?
- What will the bedroom arrangements be?
- Describe your daily routine.
- What do you do for fun?
- What are your boundaries, such as shutting bedroom/bathroom doors.
- Ask kids who is in charge?
- Tell me about your marriage (or relationship with your significant other). Give me a history. How did you meet? How long have you been together? What drew you to each other? What has life together been like?
- What do you see as your strengths as a couple? In what areas do you handle things as a team?
- Are there areas in which you strongly disagree? How do you manage or resolve disputes?
- Have you ever had problems in your relationship? Can you describe them? How did you handle them?
- Describe past relationships. Why did you terminate them? When and how did you decide to end the relationship?
- Many children in care have been sexually abused and will behave in overt sexual ways. Have you ever been in a situation where someone has been inappropriately

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

sexual toward you? How did you react? How did your spouse react? How did you handle it? Why do you think it happened? How do you feel about it now?

- Discuss your own sexual development. How did you learn about sex? How do you handle sexual issues with your children?
- How satisfied are you with your sexual relationship? Can you talk about times when you have been jealous, worried or embarrassed by sexual issues?
- How do you feel about overt sexual behavior? How do you anticipate you would deal with a sexual acting out incident?
- How do you demonstrate affection in your family? How do you know that other family members care for you? How do they show it?

Previous Marriages and Relationships # 13

Children of Applicants # 14

- -Describe each of your children. What are their special gifts or talents?
Challenges? Needs?
- How is each of your children like you? How are they different?
- What are your greatest worries about each child? What are your hopes for each?
- How do you imagine your child(ren) will respond to the adoption?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

Family/Other Household Members/Relationship # 15

Family Supports # 16

- Who would you call at 3 a.m. in a crisis?
- Who do you usually talk to re: day-to-day things, pep talk?
- To whom do you tell your deepest secrets?
- What is your back-up plan? (Death, emergency care)
- What does your family think about your plan to adopt?
- Have you talked to daycare centers, and schools?
- What are your community activities? How do you participate?
- What individuals or organizations do you turn to when you have a need? How have these individuals or organizations helped you in the past?
- When you're having a rough time, what resources do you call on to cope?
- Who is your biggest source of support when you're upset or need help?
- Have you used others in the community or resources to help you solve a problem?
How do you feel about using outside helpers?
- Have you ever been a member of a team? Tell me about it? What did you like about it? What did you dislike?
- Discuss your childhood home environment. On whom did your family rely on for help?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

Neighborhood, Community, and Home # 17

- Describe your home and community. Would you lead me on a tour of your home?
- What are your yearly income and monthly expenses?
- What are your local resources? Do you have access to them?
- What exposure do you have to culturally diverse groups?
- What culture do you identify with?
- How do you know when you are getting stressed out? What are the physical, emotional, social or cognitive cues for you? How much does it take before you get burned out?
- Do you have any buttons? What are they? How do you react when they are pushed? How do you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when nothing you planned worked? How did you react? How did you recover?
- Tell me where you have worked in the past? Why did you decide to leave your last job? How long have you been with your present employer? Do you feel satisfied with your work?
- How is money handled in your family? Who makes the decisions about spending money? How are disagreements about money resolved?
- Do members of the family experience difficulties with physical health? How are these health problems managed?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS IN CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

Document #4 - DRAFT

Criminal Background Check # 18

References # 19

Clarification of Roles # 20

Agreements #21

Evaluation # 22

Recommendation #23